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# The Hotel Lodi

*by Maurice Hill*

W.O. Corbin, early Lodi builder and contractor, and his family occupied a house in 1895 which stood on the future site of the Hotel Lodi. The land was owned by the group that operated the Granger store at Sacramento and Elm streets.

The Corbins then built a new home at the northeast corner of south Sacramento Street and Lodi Avenue.

Later, the Cary brothers moved the house a little to the west of its original location. The Carys remodeled the place by removing the gingerbread carpentry.

W.J. Thomayer, fruit shipper, bought the house and lived there for quite some years.

Finally, Mrs. Elizabeth DePauli bought and moved the building to Quimby Avenue, now south Hutchins Street. Further renovations made it a very presentable residence.

Charles Van Buskirk purchased the future hotel lot from the Grangers in 1905.

As early as July 1910 the Lodi Sentinel forecast the erection of a new hotel for Lodi. It was the general opinion, at that time, that it would be constructed by Dougherty, Whitaker & Ray Company, owners of the old Lodi Hotel. It was estimated that the cost would be $50,000 and that the hostelry would be built on the site of the present structure at the southwest corner of Pine and Sacramento streets. It was predicted that construction would start soon.

After a period of over two years, the following article appeared in print in the month of September 1912:

"The deal for a location for a fine hotel for Lodi, which has been pending for several weeks, was actually consummated Thursday when a deed was passed from C.L. Van Buskirk to James Whitaker, conveying to him the valuable lot on the southwest corner of School and Pine streets. No right was reserved in the deed, and therefore Mr. Van Buskirk now has no strings upon the property. For some time the lot was offered for sale with a proviso that a bar could never be maintained upon the property. This, it is claimed, had a tendency to discourage hotel men who declared that a hostelry would not pay without a bar.

"Mr. Whitaker has been quietly at work upon the proposition for weeks. It is understood he has interested San Francisco capital in the enterprise, and it is a known fact that the money to build the hotel is now all put up, and within a few days work will actually commence. It is claimed the building will cover the entire lot and provision will be made for spacious stores on the lower floor. The exact plans of the building are not ready for publication although it is understood the parties furnishing the money have practically decided upon a set of plans which have been drawn after the original plans for the hotel Mr. Whitaker intended building on the site of the old Hotel Lodi. Mr. Whitaker has never been known to do anything by halves and it is therefore believed that the new hotel will be one built for future needs and one of which the people of Lodi will have good reason to be proud."

Over a month later it was announced that the new hotel would be built at a cost of $75,000 by the Hotel Lodi Company headed by James Whitaker of Galt. Further information disclosed that the hotel would have three stories and a basement with 60 rooms on the upper floors. On the




***Post card dated 1912 shows architect's conception of the "Tokay Inn".***



*Jeanne Welch Milligan plays in a field of daisies on Pine Street. In the background an addition to the Hotel Lodi is under construction. The field is now the location of the Pine Street door of Farmers & Merchants Bank.*

main floor would be the dining room and kitchen, a spacious lobby and bar with fine rooms for stores fronting on School Street. Of the $75,000 Mr. Whitaker subscribed $50,000, the balance was to be raised in Lodi through stock subscription.

A.A. Brigman started out in the morning and before evening had signatures for $10,000. No trouble was expected in raising the additional $15,000 needed to finance the building. Mr. Whitaker was reported to have $50,000 on hand and signified that active operations on the building would start as soon as the rest of the money was subscribed.

As already noted, it was stated that Mr. Van Buskirk had given the deed to the lot for the hotel in September of 1912. However, it says the deed was made out Monday, and was placed in escrow. The deed to the lot was sent to Sacramento and it was surmised that the money covering the third and last payment was paid and that the deed changed hands that day, it being the last day of the option which had already been extended three times.

Mr. Whitaker, according to hearsay, intended starting building activities on Jan. 10, 1913 but it was announced in December that the architect had just started on plans for the new hostelry and that it would be a long time before the hotel was built.

By the middle of February 1913, Lodi being without a hotel, a committee was appointed by the merchants association to interview Mr. Whitaker and endeavor to find out if and when the hotel would be built. Their stand was to the effect that if Mr. Whitaker didn't intend to go ahead with the proposition, the merchants would advertise the fact that Lodi was in great need of a hotel and would exert every effort to get a new hostelry at the earliest possible date. Otherwise, if Mr. Whitaker intended to build the hotel, the merchants were not desirous of interfering with his plans. A few days later, James Whitaker assured Lodians that construction would start in a week or ten days, this announcement having been made when he appeared before the directors of the Lodi Merchants Association the evening of Feb. 24, 1913.

At this meeting he informed the group that it was now intended to provide 76 rooms for hotel guests. The front of the hotel was to be of marble. Construction alone was estimated at $50,000 with $40,000 going for furnishings and fixtures. Mr. Whitaker explained to the directors that unforeseen complications had arisen which interfered with building the hotel at an earlier date. Asked as to when the building would be completed, Mr. Whitaker wasn't able to say definitely but that he would endeaver to have it ready by the grape shipping season.

Those who were skeptical about the new hotel had to admit they were mistaken in losing faith in Mr. Whitaker's declaration that he intended to build a hotel, for on the afternoon of March 20, 1913 excavation commenced. F.H. Irey received the contract to dig the basement; however, the contract for the erection of the building had not been let. It was figured that it would take 600 loads of two cubic yards to the load to complete the excavation work. The dirt was being hauled to the local high school site where a great deal of filling was necessary.

At this time it was understood that Mr. Whitaker had decided to finance the entire project himself, without the help of Lodi people who had already subscribed $10,000. Mr. Whitaker's reason for so doing was on account of the trouble and expense attached to private corporations at that time.

The next report regarding progress made towards the construction of the proposed hotel was in April 1913 when it was made public that James Whitaker had completed arrangements for financing the Lodi Hotel building. A trust deed to the First National Bank for $35,000 was recorded and furthermore Lodians were informed that all of the money necessary to build and equip the hostelry was in readiness. Whitaker expected to spend $60,000 on the structure and $14,000 on furniture. The site including street work was to cost Whitaker $16,000 thus making a total of $90,000. The reader will note how estimates varied from time to time on the expense of construction, furnishings, etc. Mr. Whitaker made it plain that no expense would be saved in making the hotel one of the very best in the state, especially in a city the size of Lodi.

In financing the deal a number of discouraging matters came up at different times but everything was now said to be under control and the work would progress without the slightest hitch.

At this time, it came out that when the property was to be transferred by Mr. Van Buskirk, the property was deeded to two Sacramento men on account of certain business reasons; but the title had now designated James Whitaker as receiver of the deed.

A Lodi paper commented on future conduct at the new hotel:

"The buffet of the hotel will have an entrance from Pine Street. It will not be a loitering place like the old hotel. In fact, it will be different from the ordinary saloon. It will contain no chairs nor card tables and will be conducted in strictly first-class style."

In early June of 1913 work was actually said to have started on what was heralded to be the most modern hostelry in the state of California. "The dream of the people of Lodi is soon to be realized. The James Whitaker hotel will soon grace the corner of School and Pine streets. Mr. Whitaker gave instructions to F.G. Cary to go ahead with the work. The hotel will not be built by contract but by day work, Cary receiving a certain percentage for superintending the job. Careful estimates on all of the material going into the building, including the labor, places the cost of the structure at $70,000 although it may cost a little more than that amount before it is finished."

Mr. Cary lost no time in making arrangements to move ahead. Before evening, city engineer Mr. McAfee had the grades established, and the steel beams and some of the other material had been ordered.

The architect was Ralph P. Morrell of Stockton. He spent months of preparation for his design of the future hotel incorporating everything embraced in the modern hotels of the largest cities on the coast. It was said that the structure was to be built after the plans of the St. Francis hotel in San Francisco with the exception that the wings would be reversed. Thus every room would be an outside room. There was to be pressed brick on the outside of the hotel from the first floor up. The entire first floor was to be faced with marble, plate and prism glass. The main entrance was to have its entrance on School Street with a large balcony extending over the sidewalk, making a pleasant place for the ladies to sit in the cool of the evening. It would also serve as a place for public speaking or band concerts. The balcony was to have large enameled columns supporting it.




*Two postcard views of the Hotel Lodi. The top shows the hotel prior to 1920, when the annex was constructed. The bottom view was taken sometime in the 1920's, and shows the finished annex.*

Many of the rooms were designated to have private bathrooms. Twelve of the rooms were planned to have direct connection to the bath, while 18 rooms were to be connected to showers. Shower baths were becoming increasingly popular at this time and were being installed in the latest hotels. Tiling was to be used throughout the bathrooms and the latest in plumbing was to be installed. Each room was to have a private telephone, circulating ice water, steam heat and hot and cold water.

All doors were to be of hardwood two inches in thickness and veneered with mahogany. For the finishing throughout, eggshell gloss would be used — seven coats in all.

The architect planned a ballroom, 26x38 feet with maple flooring, to be located on the second floor opposite the ladies parlor. Fire escapes at convenient spots were included in the plans. Two electric elevators were to accommodate the guests while a freight lift was to be an added feature.

Continuing the description of the hotel, the lobby was to be spacious and beautiful. It was to be floored with tile with a wainscoating of Alaskan marble. Two telephone booths were to be placed in this area.

The office was to be equipped with



*Armistice Day, 1930. A military parade passes in front of the grand old hotel.*

a fire and burglar proof vault, and all fixtures used were to be up-to-date.

Ralph Morrell conceived a marble stairway leading to the mezzanine floor.

The large dining room was drawn with proportions of 42 feet long and 30 feet wide with Mission style woodwork and paneled wainscoating. The floor was to be of maple and the ceiling was to be beamed. Overlooking the dining room was to be an orchestra loft projecting from the mezzanine floor. Included in the plans was a private dining room to be used on special occasions. Several sample rooms were also provided for the traveling man. A basement was to be under the entire building.

Those employed at the hotel were to have separate living and dining room accommodations apart from the remainder of the hotel.

The walls throughout the hostelry were to be covered with selected paper and the ceilings tinted.

By June 10, 1913 there was a large supply of lumber on the ground and most of the excavation work had been completed. It was reported that "within a day or two the noise of the hammer and saw will be heard and the big job of erecting the handsome hotel will actually commence."

In the same issue of June 10, 1913, Mrs. Henrietta Monroe of the Imperial Hotel was quoted as follows: "Boost the Lodi Hotel and by so doing the Imperial Hotel business will be benefited." The Imperial is an up-to-date rooming house with neat, clean, all outside rooms, first class meals and can accommodate a good many, but not all, that would like to remain in Lodi during their travels." She went on to say that traveling men, especially, demand hotel conveniences such as rooms with private baths, elevator service and sample rooms."

She continued, "The more comforts and conveniences we have in this city, the more people we will have with us, hence the faster we grow the more business for all." Mrs. Monroe wished the new hotel great success and the City of Lodi much prosperity.

News regarding the hotel is scarce between June 1913 and June 1914. But, somewhere along the line Mr. Whitaker turned over his interest in the project to the Lodi Investment Company. By October 1914, and possibly before this date, it was in the hands of the investment company.

By October 1, 1914, the hotel building activities had progressed to a point where steel frames had been put in place and painted. Mr. Green, the contractor, hired by the Lodi Investment Company started on the carpenter work with a force of 11 men. The hotel was spoken of as a $100,000 or more venture.

It will no doubt surprise readers to learn that the opening of Hotel Lodi didn't take place until June 30, 1915, five years after it was first considered to build a new hotel in Lodi.

A badly worn copy of the front page of the Lodi Sentinel for May 1, 1915 and direct quotes from that paper are given at this point: "To say that the opening of the Hotel Lodi last night was the most brilliant affair in Lodi's history is not putting it too strongly. Men and women alike were glad of the occasion to show to the visitors from Stockton, Modesto, Sacramento, San Francisco and numerous other cities in the state what has been accomplished in this thriving little city.

It was a gay party which was seated at the fifty tables promptly at seven o'clock. The tables were placed in every conceivable space in the main dining room, lobby, mezzanine floor and one of the store rooms which had been made ready for the occasion. The tables were so arranged as to prevent crowding and there was ample room for the 28 colored waiters and ten waitresses to work.

There was not the slightest confusion during the entire meal. Everything had been provided for. There were six ushers who knew their business in finding the seats and four bus boys to carry away the dishes. John Adams of Sacramento who had charge of the dining room was certainly equal to the occasion.

The laughter and merriment of the diners could be heard above the sweet strains of the orchestras which were stationed in the main dining room and in the lobby.

Four cabaret entertainers from Sacramento did their part in jollying up the crowd. An Italian with an accordion proved himself a master of the instrument. He accompanied a man who was an artist at singing popular airs.

Mine Host, A.M. Jones did himself proud. He was everywhere mingling with the guests. Despite his great responsibility and anxiety to have everything go smoothly he did not show the least nervousness. He had a pleasant smile for everyone, demonstrating his good-natured character, which is one of the essential features of a successful hotel man.

Never was such a banquet placed before the people. Everything was cooked to perfection and the diners did full justice to the meal. The service was excellent. There were no delayed pauses between courses, but at the same time the meal was not rushed. The tables seated from four to 14.

Many intimate friends made arrangements to be at the same tables where they could have a better time than if they had been placed with strangers.

Reception committees were in charge of the affair. Mrs. W.H. Thompson, Mrs. W.H. Lorenz, Mrs. E.E. Morse, Mrs. A.V. Friedberger, Mrs. G.L. Meissmer, Mrs. H.E. Welch, Mrs. J.B. Cory, Mrs. C.W. Norton, Mrs. Geo. W. LeMoin and Mrs. Addine Beckman received the ladies.

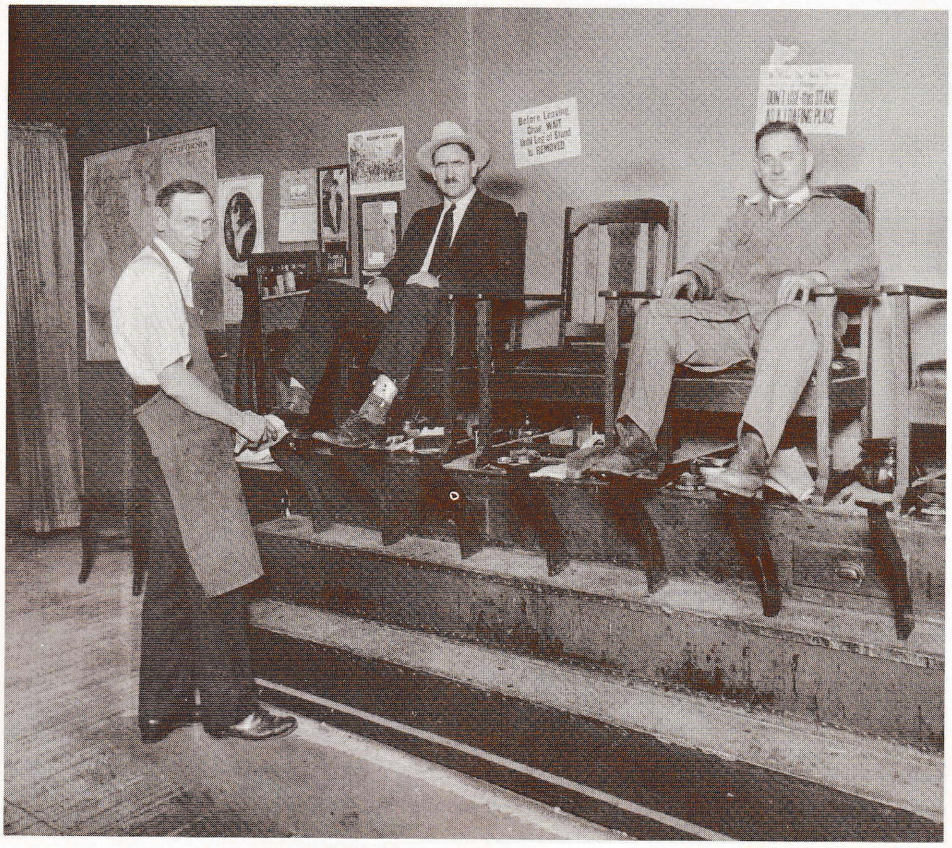
To receive the men the following were named: W.H. Thompson, W.H. Lorenz, E.E. Morse, A.V. Friedberger, G.L. Meissner, H.E. Welch, J.B. Cory, C.W. Norton and Geo. W. LeMoin.

H.E. Welch was floor director during the dance. About nine o'clock the dining room and lobby were cleared and dancing commenced to last until early in the morning. Dancing was also going on in the rooms on the second and third floor of the Beckman-Thompson Hall.

The hotel was open for inspection during the entire evening and during intervals of the dance the guests took opportunity to inspect the different parts of the building.

Every room in the hotel was taken. At an early hour this morning the cooks commenced getting breakfast which started the routine which marked the opening of one of the finest hotels in California.

Judge C.W. Norton was toastmaster of the evening. He gave a very interesting talk and was followed by attorney C.L. Neumiller who paid considerable tribute to the people of this section. Then a speech was made by attorney Geo. H. McNoble which was followed by one from Burton A. Towne who spoke upon the possibilities of the hotel. From his speech the following excerpts are given: "Great credit is due to the citizens of Northern San Joaquin County and especially to the stock holders of the corporation which built this hotel. They have gone down into their own pockets and provided for this elegant home of the public at their own expense. This building as it stands equipped now cost in the neighborhood of $150,000. About 90 percent of the stock of the corporation has been sold. This has been subscribed by the residents of Northern San Joaquin County almost exclusively. It might be said that nearly all of the money in the building came from Lodi and the surrounding towns



***Henry P. Gimbel, owner of the bootblack stand inside the hotel, poses with two customers in 1931.***

of Northern San Joaquin but the citizens of Lodi have all profited by this investment. Taking the enterprise from a mere monetary standpoint the erection of this structure has increased the land values in the City of Lodi, lying near the building in the sum of $250,000. From a selfish standpoint the city has benefited by this great work and from an unselfish standpoint every one in the community will hereafter reap a proportionate benefit from the coming of those who will visit this section and put up at this inn.

"It would not be proper, however, to close these few remarks without saying that we are greatly indebted to the manager of this institution — our friend, Mr. A.M. Jones, for the sumptuous manner in which he has arranged for the convenience and accommodation of his guests on this the opening of our fine new building. And we might add that if this is to be taken as the type of the way in which he intends to do business hereafter that his career is marked by sure success. For comfort, elegance, luxury and perfect accommodation no superior service could be had in any metropolitan resort.

"In conclusion, I can only add that good team work, good supervision and the exercise of great care has brought about the completion of this structure without any loss of life or health to any employee and without any loss of money to the investors. Great credit is also due to the contractor Mr.Green as well as to the vigilant superintendent Mr. Melville. The work has been well done so let us eat, drink and be merry."

One of the features of the ceremonies was the presentation of the master key by W.H. Lorenz, president of the Lodi Investment Company to A.M. Jones proprietor of the Hotel Lodi. The key handed to the new proprietor was the actual key which locked or unlocked every door in the entire hotel.

A long list of names follows representing the several hundred who attended the opening banquet.

As an early teenager, Maurice Hill attended this brilliant affair with his parents, Mr. & Mrs. Geo. W. Hill, and aunt, Miss Daisy M. Pleas.

A flashlight picture was taken by

photographer Logan of Stockton who used a special lens particularly adapted for taking pictures of this kind. The lens used is quite large, admitting a great quantity of light onto the plate. It shows remarkable detail for a flashlight. It was 15 minutes after the picture had been taken that the photographer was back to the hotel with the finished pictures ready for inspection. To have a newspaper cut ready for the morning issue of The Sentinel required work during a greater part of the night. Immediately after the picture was finished, V.E. Quakenbush, demonstrator of the Harley Davidson motorcycles for Graffigna Brothers, made a dash for the Stockton Photo Engravers on one of these machines. The run to Stockton was made in fifteen minutes, or an average speed of 60 miles per hour. The engravers had made all preparations to make the newspaper cut and have it ready for the early mail editions of The Sentinel's special edition this morning.

The article doesn't mention the names of the two orchestras participating in the grand opening of the hotel, but the author recalled that Patton and Springer's orchestra played in the main dining room where the Hill family was seated.

Hotel managers came and went starting with A.M. Jones. Jack Beaty was next in 1916, followed by Robert and Oscar Samet who stayed two years before the Hackels took over.

In 1920 an annex to the west end of the hotel was constructed. This addition was on west Pine Street and gave to the hotel many extra rooms.

In 1922 a similar annex was built on the south side of the hotel thus matching the first addition of 1920. Its cost was estimated at $18,000 with dimensions of 42x70 feet.

It was planned to utilize the lower portion of the addition as a dining room for special occasions and it was to be called The Gold Room.

It was a most profitable time for Hotel Lodi during the Aimee McPherson evangelistic meetings held in Lodi during the latter part of July and first part of August 1922. The hotel management reported that room accommodations were at a premium. As of Sunday night July 30, 1922 every room was taken and the sample rooms were filled with cots which were rented out for the night. It was said that every hotel and lodging house in Lodi was filled and that people were being turned away. Some found accommodations in private homes but this supply was about exhausted.

Rand S. Hackel managed the hotel until 1923, when C. A. Byler became proprietor. G.W. Kramm was the manager in 1924, but Wm. Hewins and M.J. Jones were in charge the next year.

In December of 1926, Hotel Lodi was taken over by a partnership consisting of G.W. Kramm, T.P. Neilson and Theo. Kinckinger, each being an experienced hotel man.

Kramm was back in 1927, but R.A. Smith took charge of the hotel until September of 1931 when he sold to Abel A. Borey. George Orcam operated the hotel barbershop while Henry Gimbel had the bootblack stand. Mr. Borey ran the hotel for nine years.

The Lodi Sentinel noted in its May 28, 1934 issue that Hotel Lodi had purchased a phonograph and was playing the latest music to the delight of guests.

Wednesday, June 26, 1940 set the stage for a disastrous fire which did an estimated $90,000 damage to Hotel Lodi then valued at $400,000.

For the first time in 20 years a call went out for assistance to the Stockton fire department. One Stockton truck with 14 men aboard raced to Lodi headed by an escort of the California Highway Patrol.

Three of the Stockton firemen were trapped for a while on the third floor and three Lodi firemen received injuries in fighting the fire in the 100-room hotel. Most seriously hurt was Joe Lima of Lodi who suffered a broken left arm when a fire hose was dropped from the third floor while he was holding a ladder. The nozzle hit him on the arm.

Assistant chief A.E. Blewett received a severe back injury when the roof gave way and fell 11 feet to the third floor.

There was little apprehension at the start of the fire which seemed to be confined in a six-inch separation between the ceiling of the top floor and the roof. Little of the blaze could be seen. Twenty hotel residents gathered in the lobby in their night clothes and didn't bother to bring any of their possessions with them, thinking no doubt the scare would soon be over.

The fire was discovered about 10:30 p.m. and by 11:00 was considered under control. However, the fire suddenly burst forth with unexpected fury, coming down the walls while clouds of smoke rose.

The Stockton firemen threw water from three hoses onto the blaze thus




***Onlookers watch as the Lodi Fire Department scrambles to fight the fire which broke out August 5, 1960. Damage was not nearly as extensive as the 1940 blaze.***

aiding in extinguishing the conflagration and winning the praise of Lodi's fire chief May.

So much water was poured into the burning upper stories that water seeped down into the basement to the depth of three feet. Furnishings and clothing in the entire hotel received extensive damage.

Despite the water which came down in a deluge, eight telephone operators and other employees of the Pacific Telephone Company continued to work in the structure. In spite of the fact that the electric power had been shut off, the company switched over to the auxiliary batteries and kept all wires open.

Stores on the main floor of Hotel Lodi included a soft drink establishment, a hat store, the Western Union Telegraph office, two real estate offices, two beauty shops, a doctor's office and a restaurant.

It was learned that several light bulbs had burned out in one of the top rooms which indicated a short circuit in the wiring. This was discovered shortly before the fire made itself known. Fire Chief Bill May believed it was possible that a "short" started the blaze in the attic.

A year previous, fire underwriters had said the hotel was the worst fire hazard in town because of the old type of construction.

A.A. Borey, manager of the hotel at this time was in New York attending a hotel convention.

Sam Zimmerman, president of the Lodi Investment Company which owned the hotel, reported most of the loss was covered by insurance.

After this disastrous fire, the hotel remained closed for almost a year, but reopened the latter part of April 1941 with W.J. Smith as the new proprietor. The famed Gold Room dining room also started at this time. He had a 10-year lease on the property. However, Mr. Smith didn't stay long at the hotel. Sidney Abrahams became manager of Hotel Lodi and in January 1944, Philip Light took over the hostelry.

Later, Mr. Clark Smith was owner-manager of the local hostelry.

While serving in the above capacity, John L. Heck, a future manager of Hotel Lodi came to work for Clark Smith.

Mrs. Heck was already an employee of the local hotel and Mr. Heck joined the staff in February of 1950.




***Firemen force open doors in the hotel lobby as they fight the 1960 blaze. The spectators reflect a casual attitude about the fire.***

Under Mr. Clark Smith at Hotel Lodi, Heck started in his hotel experiences at the bottom of the ladder. His first tasks consisted of cleaning floors and washing windows. But soon he was rewarded with the post of desk clerk and three years later was asked to combine his desk work with the duties of assistant manager.

At this time, Mrs. Heck was the hotel housekeeper, but soon gave up this job.

John Graffigna, the new hotel owner named Mr. Heck manager of Hotel Lodi in April 1955.

One of Hotel Lodi's long-time guests was a familiar figure on the downtown streets of Lodi. His name was Milton Steinweg, a retired hotel desk clerk who had roomed at the local hotel for 11 years. He is remembered as a man at whom most folks would look twice, and was noted for wearing a carnation or other flower in his coat lapel almost daily. He was a native of New York City and had worked in that city and in California as a hotel clerk including Lodi Hotel for a short time before his retirement. Mr. Steinweg had also operated a women's dress shop in Reno, Nevada for several years. He passed away in a Stockton hospital on November 20, 1955 at the age of 78 years.

Evidently Mr. Heck was manager for only a few months for it is noted that Elmer Van had managed the hotel for Mr. Graffigna from August 1955 to May of 1957. At this time, Mr. Van and his wife, Frances announced that they were purchasing the historic Clements Hotel.

John Graffigna appointed Mike Marchese as the new manager. Mr. Marchese, however, was only manager of Hotel Lodi for six weeks when he had to resign because of health reasons.

In 1958 Jack Keating became hotel manager, but relinquished his post the latter part of 1959 due to the illness of his wife.

While the Keatings were at Hotel Lodi, Mrs. Keating, who was born in Alaska, was co-manager with her husband. She was in charge of the Gold Room, the dining room and the Flame Annex. She acted not only as hostess, but planned the menus and did the buying. Mrs. Keating was formerly employed for 15 years at the Exposition Grotto on San Francisco's famed Fisherman's Wharf.

One of the Keatings' co-workers at Hotel Lodi was Chef Louis Graffe, a Frenchman. His specialty consisted of Polynesian cooking. Furnishing luaus, complete with suckling pig and other



*City officials and General Mills executives met in the hotel conference room in 1946. Left to right, Lemoin Beckman, unknown, unknown, Mayor Robert Rinn, City Clerk John F. Blakely, Chamber of Commerce Secretary F.S. Van Arsdale, and county Supervisor Stucken Bruck. Below, another early view of the hotel.*



delicacies peculiar to Hawaii, were among his many accomplishments.

After the departure of Mr. and Mrs. Jack Keating from the hotel, Mike Marchese took a second try as manager. It was during his stay at the hostelry that he got the idea of putting out six camphor trees fronting the hotel. They were about six feet tall and were planted in containers.

Twenty years after the big fire at Hotel Lodi in 1940, another destructive fire took place on the evening of August 5, 1960. While the first one did an estimated $90,000 damage, this fire's damage was said to be about $25,000.

The fire took place just as the San Joaquin Planning association sat down to dinner; however the planners finished their dinner as firemen fought the blaze which went up a kitchen smokestack and gutter to rooms on the second and third floors. The report was that the conflagration started with the broiler in the kitchen becoming overheated and grease from steaks caught fire. Chef Louis Graffe was preparing filet mignons for the Planning Association when the grease erupted into flames. Graffe turned off the range and attempted to fight the fire with an extinguisher, but it was ineffectual. He at once ran to the lobby to warn guests and to turn in the fire alarm. The intense heat from the fire which was shooting up the duct caused fires on the second and third floors.

Firemen climbed to the roof and chopped a four foot hole in the tar paper attempting to locate the blaze. Smoke was so thick in the corridors one couldn't see ten feet ahead. Hotel residents were evacuated including the North All-Stars football team quartered there in training for the Elks prep game on August the 13th. Rumor had it that one little old lady locked herself in her room, refusing to come out and saying, "Let the damn place burn!"

The All-Star team members tramped up and down the stairs trying to find two women reported locked in their rooms. When located the ladies refused to open their doors. One finally emerged with two cages of parakeets. As there had been no smoke in that section of the building, she hadn't known there was a fire. When firemen finally persuaded the other woman to open her door, she blushed — she didn't have a stitch on.

Fortunately, the fire was under control in a half hour. Walter Spiekerman, a volunteer fireman, was the only casualty, suffering a cut hand.


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